



Fall 2017

VOLUME 28 ISSUE 1

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AMBS window

Crossing borders

Q&A with Shabnam and Pratik Bagh of Chhattisgarh, India

Pratik Bagh started at AMBS in August 2015 and is pursuing a Master of Arts: Theological Studies (Theology and Ethics concentration). **Shabnam Pratik Bagh**, his wife, began her studies in August 2017 in the Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies program.

Could you tell us about your call to ministry and/or to seminary?

Pratik: My grandfather, Reverend J.S. Bagh, was a Hindu priest and converted to Christianity in the 1940s in Girola, India. Mennonite missionaries sent him to Janjgir Bible School, and he got trained and became a pastor. He had five sons and one daughter; all are serving the Lord in different capacities, including my father, who is a conference minister for Bhartiya General Conference Mennonite Church (BGCNC).

From early childhood I had the desire to serve the Lord. I was inspired by my grandfather's life, observing his ministry, his thoughts and his behavior. That led me to see that I'm also called to ministry.

When I finished school at age 16, I had to choose whether to go to seminary or to college for secular studies. I prayed about it. At a three-day seminar, I accepted the Lord's calling to go to Allahabad Bible Seminary in Uttar Pradesh, India (Evangelical Church of India).

After finishing my studies, I was a Mennonite pastor in the BGCNC for four and a half years. I was feeling a need in my heart to learn more about Mennonite history and theology, like who we are, what we believe and why. That curiosity led me to look for a seminary with a Mennonite focus. I talked with my uncle and a few other people who had come here for studies, and they strongly recommended AMBS as a place to learn Mennonite history and theology.

Shabnam: I'm professionally a nursing lecturer and see my call differently compared to those who are preparing themselves to become pastors. The church for me is not limited to the church building but is beyond that, and so is the ministry. Whatever we do to bless others in the world is an expression of pastoral

ministry. When I saw Pratik studying here, I got encouraged and thought of incorporating this learning into my own field to practice my nursing as well as my discipleship to Christ together.

I was also really encouraged by an AMBS webinar I listened to called "Exploring Your Call to Ministry." From my childhood I was willing to do theological studies but never got the opportunity because I chose nursing as my career. The webinar gave me some insights, and as we talked about it, I thought that being here would be a good opportunity for me to learn about theology.

What kind of ministry are you sensing a call to? How do you hope seminary will prepare you for it?

Pratik: I think it is a call from the Lord to come here and study, and get myself well trained, so that when I go back to India I may serve my conference — as a pastor or leader or in another capacity. I think as Mennonites, we have a unique witness in the midst of global Christianity. (continued on page 2)

There are very few well-trained pastors in my conference. This learning is equipping me to become a good leader with a knowledge of theology and history, and the language to translate and incorporate those core teachings into the present context.

My dream is to do a DMin/PhD and to serve in the seminary setting and also in the ministry setting, training good leaders so that we may bring a big impact on the society. Another thing that is in my heart is to open a Bible school in India for those who cannot afford to study at a larger seminary. I thank God for this great opportunity to get my training from a place like this, where the Word of God is taken seriously, and doing theology and discipleship to Christ are the utmost focus.

Shabnam: The missionaries who came to India to share the good news — including the Mennonites — their first concern was to care for the people. They opened hospitals and nursing homes, and these places became doors for the gospel to enter into the lives of local people.

Student ambassador program



Student Ambassador Jacob Liechty (Master of Divinity) grew up in Northern Ireland. **Credit:** Peter Ringenberg

As a nurse, I have observed how God works in the hospital setting, where people are not only physically sick but often emotionally and spiritually sick, too. I see myself doing a ministry where I may bring the love and presence of God to the hospital beds or to the classrooms, among those who have not received Christ yet. I am preparing myself by doing this theological training to answer their questions and guide them well.

Also, in India, women are very educated, but not generally in theology. They are not given equal position in the church as men. I would have never done theological studies in India. I would definitely like to work for the ordination of women in my conference.

Here at AMBS, I am learning to become a leader who is capable of serving in different settings. I love the atmosphere here and the professors; AMBS is making a great impact on me. •
— *Annette Brill Bergstresser, AMBS*

Front: Shabnam Pratik Bagh and Pratik Bagh (center) in a discussion circle at Pastors Week 2017. **Credit:** Jason Bryant

Consider inviting an AMBS student from an international context to share about his or her theological studies and faith journey with your congregation during worship or Sunday school! Our Student Ambassador Program helps strengthen connections between our international students and regional congregations. To line up a student ambassador to speak, contact Krysta Hartman: kmhartman@ambs.edu or 800-964-2627 ext. 227.

AMBS SNAPSHOT

A brief look at our vibrant learning community by the numbers.

103

Students enrolled in 2017–18 Semester One

19 from countries outside the U.S., including Canada, Chile, Ethiopia, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, South Korea, Tanzania

40

Number of countries where alumni live and serve

Africa (9 countries) • Asia (9)
Australia/Oceania (2)
Europe (11) • North America (3)
South America (6)

795

Total participants in Church Leadership Center offerings in 2016–17

Six countries represented from outside of North America

AMBS Window Fall 2017

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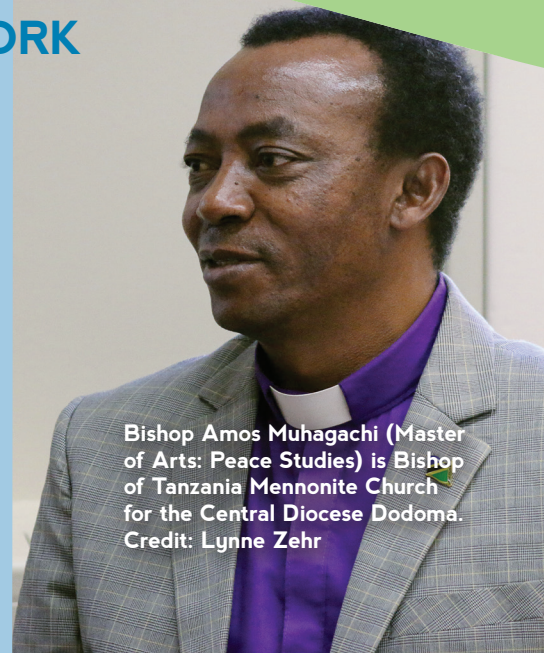


A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

AMBS awards international student scholarships annually to students who are members of Mennonite World Conference congregations or related Anabaptist groups, with the goal of encouraging and supporting them as they prepare to serve the global church. Currently, 11 international students are receiving scholarship aid from AMBS.

To donate, include "International student aid fund" in the memo line of your check to AMBS, or on the online giving form at ambs.edu/giving. Your contributions make a tangible difference in the lives of these students — and those they encounter in their ministries. •



Bishop Amos Muhagachi (Master of Arts: Peace Studies) is Bishop of Tanzania Mennonite Church for the Central Diocese Dodoma. **Credit:** Lynne Zehr



AMBS faculty integrate diverse voices

Teaching and learning from global perspectives



Janna Hunter-Bowman, PhD,
assistant professor of peace
studies and Christian social ethics

"As diverse, globally-connected classes, we discuss how particular theologies and frameworks strike students from different parts of the world. Through our discussions we discover assumptions that are embedded in different models, and we learn how to develop context-sensitive approaches to violence and processes for building peace. My students are also in conversation with the immigrant and African American communities in South Bend, as well as war-affected communities in Colombia."

Janna served for seven years in Bogotá, Colombia, in the areas of advocacy and education for justice, peace and nonviolent direct action.



Safwat Marzouk, PhD, associate professor of Old Testament

"I am an ordained pastor with the Synod of the Nile in Egypt and carry with me the challenges and the joys of the Christian community in Egypt and in the Middle East. Students who take classes with me get to know about the hermeneutical and theological heritage of this community as well as some of the contemporary challenges that the church faces in Egypt and in the Middle East. I also have served as a pastor of an Egyptian church in Jersey City (New Jersey) and bring with me to the classroom migrant churches that are flourishing in North America."

Top photo: Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations course taught by Jacqueline Hoover, sessional faculty (on the right). Credit: Jason Bryant



Allan Rudy-Froese, PhD,
associate professor of
Christian proclamation

"Throughout my doctorate and in my present research I enjoy reading and sometimes collaborating with preachers and scholars in the African American tradition. It is important for us at AMBS to reflect on and learn from these rich traditions of preaching and worship and to affirm that body and emotion are crucial in worship and preaching."

Allan is one of two AMBS professors who hail from Canada. He grew up in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, and is most recently from Ontario. •

ALUMNI VOICES

How did AMBS prepare you for ministry?



"We appreciate the biblical and theological tools we learned to use while studying at AMBS. But what stands out for us is the way we learned and were taught — as part of a learning community. We did not just learn about an Anabaptist hermeneutic where we understand Scripture together as a worshipping community, but we experienced it."
— Mark (MAPS 1987) and Mary (MACF 2008) *Hurst are mission workers*

with Mennonite Mission Network in Australia. They co-pastor Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church in Sydney and co-pastor the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand.

"Having committed to promote proactive, grassroots peace-building in Nigeria, I was impressed by Mennonites' history of nonviolence. In my first AMBS class in 2002, I studied interrelation among religions, particularly Christianity and Islam. This course changed my perception entirely about Muslims, and I became convinced

I could pursue an interfaith peace ministry. Until I had taken courses at AMBS, I didn't know what empathy truly means. AMBS taught me that *agape* love should be the focus and cornerstone for effective leadership." — Rev. Dr. Titus K. Oyeyemi (MAPS 2004) *is the founding president/CEO of African Projects/Foundation for Peace and Love Initiatives, Egbeda, Akowonjo, Lagos State, Nigeria. •*



AMBS PANORAMA



PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

SARA WENGER SHENK

Connecting with new heartlands of faith

The rapidly expanding communities of Jesus followers in non-European and North American countries is remaking the map of Christianity. At the AMBS and Goshen (Indiana) College Believers' Church Conference, held Sept. 14–16, Joel Carpenter spoke about how the revival of Christianity outside of Europe and North America is creating "new heartlands of faith." This is the age of the Spirit, he said. The emerging character of Christian faith is non-western, often including visions, healings, exorcisms and wisdom about the role of spirits. This remaking of Christianity is also increasingly part of our local reality; many immigrant communities have brought an invigorated Christian faith to our doorsteps.

Carpenter emphasized how theology in North America, influenced heavily by the Enlightenment, should remake itself. We need to be more circumspect about how contextual our theological categories have been and break out of our methodological shackles to learn from world Christianity.

AMBS is a place of creative theological re-visioning. We have entered an age

of global interconnectivity that far expands our opportunities to learn from each other. AMBS has alumni in some 40 countries, many of whom are providing significant leadership in their communities, sending emerging leaders to AMBS and teaching us theological perspectives from their own contexts. We're receiving requests to make what we offer accessible to global leaders affiliated with Mennonite World Conference and have developed programming that provides a new 27-hour, fully online **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**. Also, our Church Leadership Center offers on-line **Anabaptist Short Courses**, and **Journey** (our undergraduate missional leadership development program) can be accessed worldwide.

Church leaders around the globe can now access educational resources from an accredited, academically strong, biblically- and theologically-grounded Anabaptist seminary from a distance. These learning opportunities open up new capacities for the exchange of theological wisdom and Spirit-guided witness across borders. •

RESOURCES FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH



Master of Divinity Connect

Pursue in-depth biblical and theological study, spiritual formation and vocational internships — right where you live. This program combines online courses with some short-term on-campus sessions. Complete the 80-hour program in six years by taking 13–14 credit hours per year. ambs.edu/mdivconnect

One-course options — online

Take up to two courses without being admitted to a degree or certificate program; your first class is 50 percent off. ambs.edu/academics/one-course-options

Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

Develop a plan of study that matches your interests in this fully online 27-credit-hour certificate program. Ideal for international church leaders, bivocational pastors or other professionals. ambs.edu/graduatecertificate

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Deepen your faith and strengthen your leadership in this distance-friendly non-degree leadership development program that focuses on spiritual disciplines, theological and biblical studies, character development, mentoring and gifts development. Apply by Jan. 5 to start Feb. 2. ambs.edu/journey

Anabaptist Short Courses

These non-credit, six-week courses provide an excellent introduction to Anabaptist theology and witness. Offered online and face-to-face. ambs.edu/shortcourses

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pastors and Leaders 2018 (formerly Pastors Week) "For Such a Time as This"

Feb. 26 – March 1

Teachers and preachers from the AMBS community will explore how "fear of the Lord" uniquely prepares us to live confidently and to speak courageously in this moment in history.

ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders

Leadership Clinics

Feb. 26, 2018

Daylong workshops on church leadership

- Improvisational Leadership for the 21st Century: An Anabaptist Approach
- The Church in the Age of Migration
- 7x7: Laments for an Age of Sexualized Power

ambs.edu/leadershipclinics •

Photo: John Heyerly (MDiv 1990) and Amos Shakya (MDiv Connect student) at a Journey event. **Credit:** Jason Bryant